

## Special Congregational Meeting Minutes – March 17, 2024

Attendance: 58 members attended in-person – a quorum was established.

Call to Order and Welcome – Moderator, Mark Johnston, called the meeting to order at 11:35 am, welcomed the attending and virtual church members, and introduced 2023-24 Church Council members: Mark Johnston (Moderator), Stacy Honson (Treasurer), Jim Kern (Financial Secretary), Kelly Wright (Trustee) Mike VerMerris (Recording Secretary), Stan Greene, Michael Mok, and Bernie Lopata (Councilors At-Large). A slide presentation began with a review of today's agenda.

Opening Prayer – Council member, Bernie Lopata, opened the meeting with a prayer.

Interim Pastor Update – Stan Greene – Stan began his update by explaining the difference between the search for an interim pastor, which the Church Council is responsible for, and the search for our settled pastor, which is the responsibility of the newly formed Search Committee.

*Highlights:*

- The Church Council screened two candidates for the interim pastor role and conducted an in-person interview with one of them.
  - The candidate we interviewed brings 13 years of experience as an intentional interim pastor for multiple congregations.
  - They are currently serving as a part-time pastoral consultant for a congregation.
- We intend to finalize an interim pastor covenant, within the next week, with the candidate we interviewed.
  - The position is full-time, with a six-month term.
  - The term is renewable in three-month increments.
  - The full-time position will commence in late April 2024.
  - Part-time support will commence immediately upon signing of the interim pastor covenant and will continue during the 30-day period required for the candidate to give notice.
- As a reminder, the interim pastor is not a candidate to become our next settled pastor but will lead us through developmental tasks to insure we are the healthy congregation we need to be for our new pastor.

Search Committee Update – Greg Sherman & Jeff Spangler (Co-chairs) – committee members include Kirsten Stannis, Ginny Mikita, Phil Raywood, Bill Briggs. Member, Pat Denner, needed to step down due to health concerns. The purpose of the Search Committee is to find the next pastor using the Search and Call process as established by the United Church of Christ. The committee works independently, under the guidance of our UCC conference minister Lawrence Richardson. The deliberations of the committee and the identities of the candidates are confidential.

- *Our Church Profile* – The first part of the committee's work was to write a church profile which is a document that is posted on the United Church of Christ website, UCC.org, for ministers that are seeking a church. The church profile informs the candidate who we are and what we are looking for in a pastor. Any ordained minister may submit a profile through the UCC conference. A copy of the profile is available in the weekly church E-pistle.

- *Our Listening Sessions* – The Search Committee held a series of three listening sessions in January; 1) who are we now, 2) who is our neighbor, and 3) who is God calling to minister to us. This gave valuable information to add to the profile and to use as a guide when evaluating candidates to determine if they are a good fit for our congregation. The church listening session comments are posted in the E-pistle.
- *A Different Process* – It was recommended—but not required—that UCC candidates are interviewed first and if that pool of candidates was exhausted, non-UCC candidates should be considered. At their first meeting the committee decided that they would consider UCC and non-UCC on an equal basis, and if chosen, the candidate must agree to become ordained in the UCC. The reason being, that Pastor Sal Sapienza came to us as an interfaith minister and quickly fulfilled the UCC ordination requirement.
- *What's Happening Now?* – Soon after the profile was posted, nine ministerial profiles were received from pastors who expressed interest in our church. The search committee evaluated the profiles to determine which ones they would like to interview. First would be a Zoom interview or interviews, and then a personal interview if they decide they want to hear more from the candidate. The committee is now in the interviewing stage for the first group of candidates. This week they received an additional five candidates. Search Committees may choose to move forward with a profile, keep it in reserve, or end consideration of a profile. If they decide to advance a candidate further, they have the option of holding a neutral pulpit, which is where a candidate gives a sermon/homily at a Sunday service at a nearby third-party church that the committee members attend. Another option is a private pulpit held at our church but only for the Search Committee.
- *The Final Steps* – If the search committee selects a final candidate, the church will host a 'Candidating Weekend'. This is an opportunity for various groups in the church to meet the final candidate and for the whole congregation to experience a Sunday service with the candidate leading and giving a homily. Throughout the weekend, the Search Committee takes the lead in presenting the candidate as a match to the vision expressed in the Local Church Profile. The final event of the Candidating Weekend is a congregational vote on the candidate by members in attendance after the Sunday Service, conducted by the Church Council in accordance with church bylaws. If the congregational vote is affirmative, the search committee will extend the invitation to the candidate to be our next settled pastor.
- *The Big Question* – The big question is: When will we have a new pastor? The answer is: we don't know yet. Someone out of the first group of candidates could be chosen, which would make it a very short process, or it may be decided that none of these candidates are a good fit for us and then wait for more to come in. We know there is a new pastor for us. With the help of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the support of this wonderful congregation, we will get there! Our interim minister will help us. Please keep the search committee in your prayers. Your attendance on Sunday, continued involvement in our many programs, and your viewership online helps us so much in this time of transition.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Status – Mark Johnston – Treasurer, Stacy Honson, provided the financial information for the meeting. Stacy is traveling out of the country, so Mark spoke on the information presented.

*Highlights:*

- Actual income of \$214,958, does not include the over \$100,000 collected to date by the Campus Stewardship Drive.

- Mission & Social Action expenses are slightly below budget, due to a lull in applications expected to pick up in the coming months.
- Net income is well over budget, in part due to the period we have not had to pay a pastor.
- The FY24 information presented is from July 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024:

<b>FY24 Budget Status</b>		
<b>(July 1, 2023 – Feb 29, 2024)</b>		
	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
<u>Income</u>	214,958	238,176
Expenses:		
Pastoral	92,082	113,600
Mission & Social Action	24,959	35,467
Program & Worship	19,061	21,653
Facility	48,525	52,080
General & Administrative	9,597	9,600
<u>Total Expense</u>	194,224	232,400
<u>Net Income</u>	20,734	5,776

Campus Stewardship Drive Update – Pete Mueller (Co-chair) – Jim Kern (Co-chair) is traveling out of the country, so Pete spoke on the information presented. Kelly Wright (Trustee) spoke on where we are at within the campus improvement phases resulting from the stewardship drive.

*Highlights – Stewardship Drive:*

- Target amount = \$275,000, Pledged amount = \$229,000, Pledge fulfillment amount = \$125,000. The contingency plan will just about make up for the difference between the Target and Pledged amounts.
- Total giving units available = 280, Giving units participating = 140. It is very exciting to see participation is at 50 percent.

*Highlights – Campus Improvements:*

- Phase 1-2024 – items completed:
  - Friendship Hall – water damage remediation, and repairs to the vestibule and door.
  - Isabel Graham Center – excavation and regrading.
- Phase 1-2024 – items scheduled:
  - Isabel Graham Center – paint the exterior, replace rear fence, improve the driveway and parking.
- Phase 2-2025 – items planned:
  - Friendship Hall – secure the bowed walls, remodel and upgrade the kitchen, remodel and upgrade the bathrooms, provide a supply closet, replace the memorial garden fence.
  - Isabel Graham Center – rebuild the entrance and add sidewalks for accessibility, improve the sprinkler and landscape.
  - Retreat House & Spiritual Center – improve the garage, landscape the front and back yards, add trees and contemplative gathering spaces.

Council Membership – Mark Johnston

*Highlights:*

- Members commit to a 2-year initial term.
- A mix of role-specific positions (Moderator, Treasurer, etc.) and At-large positions comprise the Church Council.
- At the conclusion of an initial term, members can elect to remain on Council for an additional two years.
- After four years of service, members must roll off for at least one year.
- Meetings are monthly and last approximately two hours, with additional meetings scheduled as needed for urgent business.
- Two seats are coming up for vacancy:
  - Stan Greene, At-large member, will complete four years of service.
  - Kelly Wright, Trustee, will complete two years of service.
- If you are interested in serving or would like to find out more information, please reach out to Church Administrator, Julie Ridl.
- New candidates will be voted in and affirmed at the annual meeting of the Church, held near the end of the fiscal year in late June.

Adjournment at 12:30 pm.

**Motion:** from Pamela Chappell to adjourn. Paul Burdick second. Motion approved.